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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the role of teacher educators in helping resolve the national shortage of qualified teachers who are able to work with increasingly diverse students. This critical shortage requires intentional, aggressive recruitment of high quality future teachers, particularly from traditionally underrepresented groups. The involvement of teacher education faculty in these recruitment efforts strengthens the emerging professionalism of teaching and enhances the appeal of careers in teaching. Recruitment efforts at one high-needs, ethnic minority, urban high school began as an extension of a Texas university's field-based teacher education program. University faculty speak to high school classes and support efforts to begin a future teachers' organization. Preservice teachers provide models for high school students, who are mentored by their clinical teachers in the high school classrooms. Evening planning meetings allow opportunities to promote the teaching profession among high school students. Preservice teachers make presentations to high school students on teaching as a career. Student surveys in December 2000 indicated that three-fourths of the high school students had no interest in teaching. Information gained from the survey supports the offering of a future teachers' course and establishment of a future teachers' club. (SM)

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Building the Profession Through Faculty Recruitment of Future Teachers

ED 452 163

The shortage of qualified teachers, along with the increasingly diverse student population in our nation's schools are important and overlapping issues in teacher education. According to the United States Department of Education (1998) over 52 million students will "stretch the capacity of our nation's schools for many years to come." Do teacher educators have a responsibility in helping to resolve this problem? If so, what is the role of teaching faculty in the recruitment of future teachers? What changes must occur in order for our nation's teacher education programs to produce greater numbers of high-quality new teachers who are prepared to teach our diverse student population in the years ahead?

The Texas Teacher and Retention Study of February, 1999, commissioned by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), describes a serious shortage of teachers in Texas. Texas teacher education programs are not graduating enough new teachers to meet the demands of rapidly increasing school enrollments. Furthermore, teachers in Texas, as well as nationwide, are leaving the profession in alarming numbers, ranging from one-third to one-half within three years of their first teaching assignment (TEA, 1999; Ingorsoll, 1997). Urban school districts have reported critical shortages in special education, as in the content areas of math and science (Council for Exceptional Children, 2000).

Our nation's teachers continue to be predominantly comprised of white women despite the increasing diversity of our student population. Feistritzer (1996) reported that about 90% of the public school teachers are white and 75% are women (Latham, Gitomer & Ziomek, 1999).

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Our current and future teachers represent the diversity found among today's students to a lesser and lesser extent. "The mismatch between the diverse population of students and the relatively homogeneous population of teachers makes it difficult for all students to have role models in school with whom they can identify" (Latham, Gitomer & Ziomek, 1999).

The critical shortage of teachers requires intentional, aggressive recruitment of high-quality future teachers, particularly from traditionally underrepresented groups. Involvement of teacher education faculty in these recruitment efforts strengthens the emerging professionalism of teaching, in addition to enhancing the appeal of a career in teaching. The importance of educators' involvement with the recruitment of future teachers is addressed in A Proposal for a Teacher Recruitment Initiative: Responding to the Texas Education Agency's Challenge produced by the Texas A & M University System/The Texas Education Agency Partnership For Texas Public Schools. This proposal cited findings from research studies that support teacher/teacher educators' involvement in future teacher recruitment, several of which are listed below.

- ✓ Teachers ranked second place behind parents as having the most influence on students' career choices – whether by actions or words.
- ✓ The teacher-mentor role can have such a great impact that many teachers choose to teach the same grade level and subject area as the ones in which they were most influenced as students.
- ✓ Precollegiate programs that expose students to teaching have proven effective. One model increased student interest from 41 to 68 percent.

- ✓ The reason for the decrease in the number of Hispanic students entering the profession may lie with the institutions that develop and nurture tomorrow's educators rather than the students themselves.
- ✓ Hispanic students, who are more likely to teach in urban districts than other ethnic groups, are not fully courted. One study found that approximately 30 percent would select teaching as a career. Barriers include lack of financial support, career awareness, and positive information about the profession as well as lack of encouragement from significant others.

Recruitment efforts at a high-needs, ethnic minority, urban high school began midway through the Spring 2000 semester as an extension of the Texas A & M University – Corpus Christi field-based teacher education program. Positive relationships between Miller High School and TAMU-CC faculty developed during the first three years of this partnership support intentional efforts to promote teaching as a career among the MHS students. In addition to the inclusion of preservice teachers and university professors into the daily routine of Miller High School, a school-wide survey of students' interests in teaching as a career and presentations promoting the teaching profession have occurred. The university professors have spoken to an education class of high school students with teaching interests and supported efforts to begin a future teacher organization at the high school.

Preservice teachers provide an appealing model for high school students. They are mentored by their "clinical teachers" in the high school classrooms. Many of our preservice teachers are ethnic minorities themselves, thus providing an even stronger identification for many of the MHS students. The university professors are known throughout the school through regular observation of preservice teachers in the classrooms, planning with administrators,

conversations with clinical teachers, as well as informal contact with students in and out of the classrooms.

A nine-hour block focused on planning, teaching, assessment and technology that meets every Tuesday and Thursday at the high school precedes the culminating student teaching semester in our field-based teacher education program. This nine-hour block provides a rich, natural opportunity to promote the teaching profession among the students of the high school. University professors, preservice teachers, and school teachers and administrators working together provide a freshness and energy which has appeal to many students.

One required course project involved preservice teachers creating a short presentation aimed at promoting teaching as a career option for high school students to consider. Preservice teachers developed their presentations using both PowerPoint and overhead transparency formats. They presented both versions of their program to two different homeroom groups of seniors or juniors. Questions about how to choose a college, financial aid and scholarships, and college entrance requirements were often addressed during these presentations, in addition to direct conversations between high school students and preservice teachers about becoming a teacher.

A school-wide survey of high school juniors' and seniors' interest in teaching was administered in early December, 2000. The "Career Teaching Interests of Miller High School Juniors/Seniors" survey was completed by 189 students during the "Buc Family" homeroom period. Approximately three fourths of the respondents indicated no interest in the teaching profession. Forty-two MHS juniors and seniors participating in the survey indicated varying degrees of interest in teaching. Thirty-nine students would consider the possibility of teaching, while seven students are actually planning on a career in teaching.

Information gained from this survey supports the offering of a "future teachers' course," as well as the establishment of a "future teachers' club" at Miller High School. Miller is one of two high schools in the Corpus Christi Independent School District that offers a "Careers in Education" course that falls under the Career and Technology Department of the school. Opportunities for MHS students enrolled in this course to have meaningful connections with the professors and preservices teachers of the TAMU-CC field-based teacher education program are plentiful. The MHS students spend approximately 15 hours a week at an elementary or middle school campus in addition to meeting their class on campus. They are paid minimum wage for the time they spend at their "host" campuses. Plans are being made to increase participation between the MHS students enrolled in Careers in Education and the TAMU-CC preservice teachers.

Discussions have taken place among MHS and TAMU-CC faculty regarding the establishment of a future teachers club at Miller High School. Students enrolled in the Careers in Education course, plus survey respondents indicating an interest in teaching will be encouraged to participate in this club. This collaborative school-university effort to establish a future teachers' club at MHS is an extension of the A& M University system-wide partnership with the Texas Association of Future Educators (TAFE). Texas A & M University – Corpus Christi has established a position of Coordinator of Teacher Recruitment and participates at the annual TAFE conferences, plus encourages the establishment of TAFE clubs at area high schools such as Miller.

The shortage of quality teachers is critical in Texas and across our nation. No simple answer exists. Teacher educators surely have an important role to play in this educational dilemma, but what will it be? We have described some efforts by teacher educators aimed at

promoting the teaching profession among students in a single high school. These efforts are supported by a school-university partnership within the field-based teacher education program of TAMU-CC. Furthermore, the A & M system-wide initiative aimed at producing more and better teachers continues to open new doors for teacher educators to play influential roles in our area schools. Recognizing that the public image of teachers and schools is at times negative (Froyen & Iverson, 1999), teacher educators have a responsibility to inform, encourage and, even recruit future teachers.

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